



LIFE SCIENCES

A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITIES IN WELL-BEING

Health care and well-being are topics to which all of us can relate. Businesses owners are well aware of the effect that poor health can have on the overall productivity of a work force, as well as on the infant mortality rate and life expectancy of a population. International attention has focused recently on the health issues of both developing countries and industrialized nations.

Communicable and preventable diseases in both the developed and developing countries are astounding. Rates of migration, ease of travel, and the breakdown of health systems contribute to the spread of these illnesses. For example, according to the World Health Organization, Europe is experiencing an alarming rise in the numbers of cases of tuberculosis (TB), particularly in Eastern and Central Europe and the former Soviet Union. The number of TB patients in Europe rose from 280,000 in 1995 to 370,000 in 2000.

The obstacles in reaching affected populations range from inadequate infrastructure to insufficient medical personnel and medicines as well as cultural assumptions regarding the spread and treatment of diseases like AIDS.

Awareness of these issues and dedication by national and international organizations to take steps to remedy them mean that opportunities exist for U.S. health care companies. Major industries such as pharmaceuticals, nutritional products, biotechnology, and diagnostics are being affected by these worldwide health challenges.

The U.S. pharmaceutical industry is the pinnacle of a global, multibillion-dollar market. This industry leads the world in research, innovation, and growth. It also responds to widespread demographic trends, including rising living standards in developing countries, regional pandemics, and growing elderly populations in developed nations. The U.S. pharmaceutical industry represents more than half of the global market, and the export opportunities for U.S. companies are solid.

In the United States, research organizations, government agencies, health care systems, physicians, regulatory authorities, financial institutions, and consumers all come together to create an industry that is the envy of the world. The pharmaceutical industry is one of the crown jewels of U.S. manufacturing. However, serious issues in regulation, market access, and other areas must be addressed if the United

States is to maintain world leadership in this vital industry.

Meanwhile, advances in life sciences have created tremendous growth prospects and export opportunities. Biotechnology and diagnostics offer some of the most exciting developments, including safer medicines, cleaner manufacturing processes, and increased agricultural yields. Additionally, the mapping of the human genome and proteins has spurred the development of all sorts of techniques and products to fight diseases. At the same time, nutritional products have performed well in recent

years and have good overseas prospects, particularly in Asia.

Market research, proper product classification, regulatory considerations, and other fundamental factors greatly influence the likelihood of success in exporting activities. Within this feature, specialists from the Trade Development unit of the U.S. Department of Commerce present both the opportunities and challenges inherent in exporting pharmaceuticals, nutritional products, biotechnology, and diagnostics. ■